



GRAIN TRANSPORTATION REPORT

Shipper and Exporter Assistance Program
Transportation and Marketing
Agricultural Marketing Service
United States Department of Agriculture

November 17, 1997

Grain Continues To Pile Up. The bumper crop of grain continues to pile up outside of country elevators and on farms in Kansas, according to the Kansas Co-op Council. The Council doesn't expect the grain to be moved until well after Thanksgiving. Most Kansas elevators are full, including terminal elevators at Salina, Atchison, and Topeka. Large terminal elevators in St. Joseph, MO, are also full with terminal elevators in the Kansas City area at about 85 percent of capacity. Central Plains elevators have been lowering their stocks of wheat, but in many cases, incoming wheat is arriving faster than older stocks can be shipped. Low wheat prices in the export market have not helped the situation. The severe shortage of railcars, caused primarily by poor car utilization, has resulted in absolute gridlock on the UP/SP rail system. Grain carloadings for the week ended Nov. 8 totaled 25,147 cars, which is 20 percent less than last year for the similar week. Total carloadings for the calendar year to date are slightly behind last year. However, grain carloadings have fallen by more than 19,000 cars during the 4 weeks ending Nov. 8, when compared to last year for the same period, when there were few complaints about the availability of grain cars.

Barge Operators Will Remove Barges From Upper Mississippi River. Most tow boat operators will remove barges from the upper confines of the Mississippi River by Nov. 19, as ice begins to develop in the upper reaches of the river, according to the Bridge News Service. Also, this year the Army Corps of Engineers will close Locks No. 14 near Davenport, IA, on Dec. 1. Barges north of Davenport wanting to go south to St. Louis or New Orleans must be south of Davenport by Nov. 30. The Corps also announced a closing date of Dec. 15 for Lock No. 25, located south of Grafton, IL. Although barging operations can continue locally, shippers located north of the lock will not be able to ship on the river until early spring. Because of the closure, grain shippers have raised their basis bids for corn, soybeans, and wheat by 1-3 cents per bushel. Also, rail congestion has hindered the movement of grain, giving terminal operators more incentive to load as much grain as possible on barges for delivery to Mississippi Gulf export terminals.

Corn Production Estimates Increase And Soybeans Remain Unchanged From Last Month. The 1997 corn production estimates released by USDA on November 10, 1997, show this year's corn production forecast at 9.36 billion bushels, 1 percent higher than reported in October and also up 1 percent from 1996 production. The corn crop estimate is based on conditions as of November 1, and yields are expected to average 126.4 bushels per acre, up 0.6 bushels from last month and nearly identical to the 126.5 bushels estimated for 1996 yields at the same time. This is the third largest corn harvest behind the record setting 1994 and 1992 corn crops. Soybean production is forecast at a record 2.74 billion bushels as of November 1, unchanged from the October 1 forecast, and 15 percent above 1996 production. The yield is forecast at 39.2 bushels per acre, 0.2 bushels above the October 1 estimate and up 1.6 bushels from 1996 yields. The estimated yield for Illinois, Indiana, and Iowa decreased from the previous monthly forecast. The corn harvest was 75 percent complete November 2 in the 17 major producing States. This compares with 62 percent for 1996 and 64 percent for the 5-year average.

River Situation. At the Melvin Price Locks and Dam during the previous 24 hours ending midnight Sunday (Nov. 16), 8 tows with 74 barges passed upbound, and 12 tows with 148 barges passed in the downbound direction. Also, on Nov. 17, a 3-hour transit delay had tows backed up at Lock and Dam 25. The Army Corps of Engineers reported they will close Lock 25 on Dec. 15, for the season. On Monday (Nov. 17), at 6:00 a.m., there were no tows waiting to go upbound, and one waiting to go downbound. In the Columbia River Basin on Friday (Nov. 14), 7 vessels were at berth loading, while 14 waited.

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SOUTHBOUND BARGE FREIGHT RATES*

Week Ended November 7

River/Region	Contract Period	Rate**
Mid Mississippi River	November	160.0

* Based on Actual Trades from the Merchants Exchange of St. Louis Barge Call Session

** Rates are Quoted as a Percentage of the 1976 Tariff Benchmark

PROJECTED 1997/98 MARKETING YEAR WHEAT SUPPLY AND USE*million metric tons*

	U.S.	Major Exporters	World
Beginning Stocks	12.07	26.56	108.79
Production	68.76	149.45	603.04
Domestic Use	36.33	100.64	583.30
Exports	29.26	72.88	112.53
Ending Stocks	17.83	23.31	128.54

Major exporters include Argentina, Australia, Canada and EU-15.

Source: World Agricultural Supply and Demand Estimates, USDA, November 10, 1997.

WEEK ENDED	1997	COMPARABLE WEEK
		1996

INSPECTIONS FOR EXPORT*1,000 Bushels*

Oct 9	89,746 *	53,389
Oct 16	96,044 *	77,490
Oct 23	90,544 *	95,461
Oct 30	94,616 *	99,634
Nov 6	90,726	99,707
Calendar Year to Date	3,136,787 *	3,593,254

* Revised

RAIL CARLOADINGS*Carloads*

Oct 11	25,968 *	24,526 *
Oct 18	25,099 *	28,446 *
Oct 25	26,631 *	29,567 *
Nov 1	24,449 *	30,533 *
Nov 8	25,147 *	31,793 *
Calendar Year to Date	1,045,900 *	1,066,732 *

* Revised - Soo Line Not Included

RAIL DELIVERIES TO PORT*Carloads*

	North Atlantic	So. Atlantic & Gulf	Pacific Coast	North Atlantic	So. Atlantic & Gulf	Pacific Coast
Oct 8	171	2,301	3,866 *	0	822	1,979
Oct 15	136	2,802	3,359	0	1,839 *	3,031
Oct 22	152	2,692	3,724	0	2,943	4,166
Oct 29	250	2,701	3,907	7	3,236	4,378
Nov 5	84	2,811	4,879	24	3,813	3,828
CY to Date	2,066	101,945 *	161,611 *	2,644	127,032 *	167,037

* Revised

BARGE GRAIN MOVEMENTS*1,000 Tons*

River / Lock Number	Week ending 11/8/97					Week ending 11/9/96				
	CORN	WHT.	SOY	OTHER	TOTAL	CORN	WHT.	SOY	OTHER	TOTAL
Miss./15	581	0	173	3	758	572	26	159	5	761
Miss./25	513	6	91	2	612	702	15	128	2	847
Miss./26	724	6	130	2	862	957	17	201	2	1,176
Miss./27	702	11	147	3	863	979	31	214	2	1,226
Ill. /8	192	0	17	0	209	269	55	0	0	324
Ohio /52	38	3	47	110	198	6	0	27	160	193
Ark./1	8	18	16	0	42	0	15	10	0	25

Calendar year totals for Miss./27, Ohio/52 and Ark./1:

Year	Corn	Wheat	Soybeans	Other Grains	Total
1997	24,516	2,402	7,797	2,874	37,589
1996	28,028	2,175	6,916	3,527	40,645

Other grains include barley, sorghum and oats. Totals may not add due to rounding. Data source: U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

MAJOR EXPORT SALES **1,000 Metric Tons*

WEEK ENDED	1997			COMPARABLE WEEK 1996		
	WHEAT	CORN	SOYBEANS	WHEAT	CORN	SOYBEANS
Oct 9	4,587	7,279	10,722	4,073	15,080	6,704
Oct 16	4,239	7,126	9,869	3,762	14,605	7,502
Oct 23	4,414	7,121	8,897	3,654	14,537	7,613
Oct 30	4,248	7,299	8,105	3,538	14,298	7,545
Nov 6	4,138	7,606	7,331	3,528	14,132	7,748

*Unshipped Balances-Current & Next Marketing Year

GULF COAST OCEAN GRAIN VESSELS

		1997			COMPARABLE WEEK 1996		
		IN PORT	LOADED 7 DAYS	DUE NEXT 10 DAYS	IN PORT	LOADED 7 DAYS	DUE NEXT 10 DAYS
Oct 16	37	46	64	34	42	68	
Oct 23	30	61	60	43	43	58	
Oct 30	34	50	67	50	52	82	
Nov 6	35	56	75	57	52	71	
Nov 13	33	49	70	55	59	70	

AVERAGE GRAIN PRICES*Dollars Per Bushel*

	1997			COMPARABLE WEEK 1996		
	WHEAT	CORN ¹	SOYBEANS ²	WHEAT	CORN ¹	SOYBEANS ²
Oct 10	3.83	2.82	6.66	4.75	3.09	7.32
Oct 17	3.91	2.81	6.98	4.79	2.91	6.88
Oct 24	3.99	2.80	6.85	4.77	2.85	6.95
Oct 31	3.90	2.76	6.80	4.72	2.73	6.87
Nov 7	3.95	2.77	7.17	4.76	2.72	6.89

(Wheat-#1 HRW-ORD., Kansas City; Corn-#2 Yellow, Chicago; Soybeans-#1 Yellow, Chicago)

¹ Bought to arrive 15 days; ² Bought to arrive 30 days.**OCEAN FREIGHT RATES****Dollars/Tons - Basis Vessel Size/Ton*

U.S. Loading Port	Destination	Estimated Freight Rates	Dates of Movement
St. Lawrence	Rotterdam	\$09.00 - (44M)	November
Pacific Northwest	Taiwan	\$12.50 - (54M)	December
Gulf	Japan	\$22.00 - (54M)	December
Gulf	China	\$21.00 - (50M)	November
Gulf	Morocco	\$12.50 - (30M)	November
Gulf	Hamburg	\$10.50 - (55M)	November
Gulf	Taiwan	\$21.25 - (54M)	December

*These ocean fixtures are based on full ship charters.